



Tracts & Trails

Newsletter of Scarborough Land Trust

Blue Point Preserve: A New Gem on the Marsh

SLT's new Blue Point Preserve (BPP) is a wonderful example of how patience, partnerships and planning can pay off in a new conservation gem for Scarborough.

At SLT's first property on Scarborough Marsh, a short, leisurely stroll on well-marked and well-made trails takes you to a sweet, intimate view of the Marsh, complete with a comfortable bench in a grassy clearing where you can linger and look for a good long time at an expanse of land and sea and sky, away from the noise of traffic.

BPP provides a perfect spot to stop and take in the beauty of the Marsh. Visit at different times of day, at different tides, and in different seasons, and you will see and appreciate more of the majesty of the vast ecological treasure that is the heart of Scarborough. And, with less than a mile of trails, BPP can provide that quick escape we sometimes need from home or work during these more confined and socially-distant times.

The entrance to BPP is on Seavey Landing Road, off Pine Point Road, just before Blue Point Congregational Church.

You'll see the preserve sign on the right, underneath a huge horse-chestnut tree that sports big beautiful blossoms in the spring, and chestnuts in the fall. Parking is limited, so please return another time if the parking area is full.

This 14-acre preserve includes property formerly owned by the late Donald Whitten that was held by the Town. In 2019, SLT began the process to assume ownership and permanently conserve the property, joining forces with Friends of Scarborough Marsh (FOSM) to raise funds. Blue Point Congregational Church became an unexpected and welcomed lead partner when they offered to sell an adjoining parcel that almost doubled the size of the preserve. With contributions from FOSM, the Town Land Bond Fund and SLT, we launched a \$100,000 Capital Campaign in May 2019 to raise the remaining funds needed. Over 140 individuals and businesses contributed to meet our goal in July 2019.

Risbara Construction donated services to demolish the deteriorated house and remove fuel and septic tanks,

(Continued on page 3)



President's Message

by Rick Shinay



Despite the many Covid-19-related challenges we have faced over the past six months, we have all carried on and done our best to maintain some sense of normalcy during these incredibly abnormal times. The Scarborough Land Trust is no exception. At the outset of the pandemic, the Board of Directors vowed to do everything possible to keep our properties open so there would continue to be opportunities

for people to, at least for a few hours, "get away from it all."

I'm pleased to report that we have been able to meet that goal. From Pleasant Hill Preserve to Fuller Farm, from Blue Point Preserve, our newest property, to Libby River Farm and all our other properties, we have been able to keep them open and accessible thanks in no small part to the responsible observance of social distancing and the wearing of masks by an ever-increasing number of visitors. We thank everyone for doing their part in helping us keep our properties open and safe, and we encourage you to continue to do so as we head into the fall and winter months.

Even during this unprecedented and challenging pandemic, the Land Trust has accomplished much.

- Thanks in no small part to the efforts of Stewardship and Piper Shores Woodshop volunteers, as well as Risbara Construction, Scarborough Public Works and L. P. Murray & Sons, we completed a new access road, parking area and trails at our newest property, **Blue Point Preserve**, with an official opening in June. *(See lead story on p. 1 & 3)*
- We signed a **99-year lease with Broadturn Farm, Inc.**, the corporate entity owned by John Bliss and Stacy Brenner,

that will help ensure the long-term viability of their farming operations, a goal that is extremely important to John and Stacy and to the Land Trust. *(See John & Stacy's article on p. 5.)* We continue to be fortunate to have such wonderful and dedicated stewards of Broadturn Farm.

- **Stewardship work has continued at Pleasant Hill Preserve** where an additional boardwalk has been constructed and a new trail built through the back woods. Replacement bog bridges have been recently installed **at Libby River Farm** by the Maine Conservation Corps. Additional work on our trails continues with the help of our dedicated (and masked!) Stewardship volunteers. *(See Stew-Com article on p. 4.)*

Change has also come to the staff of the Land Trust. We have said goodbye to Executive Director, Rich Bard, and to our Stewardship Coordinator, Hannah Chamberlain, as they have moved on to new careers. The Land Trust has achieved much during their time with us thanks to their hard work and dedication, and we will miss them. As I write this message, the effort is underway to hire a new Executive Director, and we hope to bring someone on board very soon.

We are very pleased to have **Sami Wolf join us as our new Stewardship Coordinator**. Sami brings considerable skills and a strong passion for land stewardship to the Land Trust, and I invite you to read more about her background in the article below and on our website. Welcome Sami!

Lastly, after many years as our Office Administrator, **Sandi Dargi** has decided to retire leaving a void that will be a challenge to fill. We have all enjoyed working with Sandi and have appreciated her cheerful attitude and can-do spirit, and we will miss her very much. *(See our Tribute to Sandi on p. 3.)*

As I close, on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Land Trust, I want to thank all of you very much for your continued financial and volunteer support. Now more than ever, such support is critical to the work of the Land Trust as we continue to move through these difficult and challenging times. Be well and be safe.

Meet our New Stewardship Director

We are very pleased to announce that **Samantha (Sami) Wolf** has joined us as our new, full-time Stewardship Director. Sami brings to the position a strong background in biology, sustainability, property management, trail design and construction, volunteer recruitment and management, and natural science education. She has a B.S. from Lyndon State College in Vermont where she majored in Sustainability Studies and minored in Biology, as well as a Master's degree in Conservation & Biodiversity from Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland.



Most recently she served as Stewardship Coordinator for Falmouth Land Trust where she monitored 18 fee and 23 easement properties and 35 miles of trail, managed some 50 volunteers, and implemented a Diversity and Inclusion policy. She was also, concurrently, the Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator for the Town of Falmouth. There she managed trail maintenance and volunteers, guided the town's Land Acquisition and Management Committee, designed

educational events, and updated their Trail Management Plan to incorporate ADA compliance goals.

During the short two months Sami has been onboard, she has been very active in the community and on our properties. She is currently working on property monitoring, designing and scheduling socially-distant volunteer and educational events, and leading multiple trail maintenance projects.

"When I moved to Southern Maine and began exploring the area," said Sami, "I was awe-struck by the habitat diversity and sheer beauty of the greater Scarborough area. I am very pleased to be part of the Scarborough Land Trust family, and the extended family of conservation and education organizations in Southern Maine. There is so much important work ahead of us, and I am delighted to be at the forefront with some really enthusiastic and wonderful people!"

Welcome aboard, Sami! We're delighted to have you!

Tribute to Sandi Dargi



Sometimes the stars align in just the right way to bring exactly the right person to a growing organization like ours at just the right time. And so it was in the spring of 2014 when Sandi Dargi joined SLT, first as a database contractor to help with an old database which crashed, and

eventually becoming our first Administrative Coordinator. She came to us with her well-organized, engineering mind, and her substantial experience with software, technology, and business administration. Sandi holds a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from UMass Amherst, an M.B.A. from Babson College, and worked for a number of years as an engineer in the software industry for Applied Materials and National Semiconductor.

With her special talents and ever cheerful temperament, she helped us convert to a needed new database, managed the office, and took on bookkeeping. When we expanded our office space and event venues, she provided great advice on the purchase of needed technology and equipment. She also supported virtually every SLT activity and event, whether

it was our many community outreach efforts, our annual meetings, our Spring and Fall newsletters and appeal mailings, or our Broadturn Farm fundraising dinners, where she served for many years as setup volunteer, greeter and server. Sandi has a true passion for conservation, served on the Town Sustainability Committee, and was a long-time tax volunteer for AARP.

Sadly, Sandi has tackled some serious health issues over the past two years and has recently decided to resign her position as our beloved Administrative Coordinator. We are very pleased, however, that she will stay involved on a volunteer basis, as her health allows. She recently completed a very important volunteer project for us, transitioning our database to a new and improved platform, which will greatly ease the work load and learning curve for her successor.

To recognize and honor her invaluable service to SLT, we are naming the trail at her favorite Broadturn Farm property "Sandi's Silver Brook Trail." We held a trail-naming ceremony there in her honor in late October.

Sandi, as we love and appreciate you, so we will miss you. Thank you for your many contributions to the continued growth and success of SLT.

(Blue Point Preserve... continued from page 1)

and partnered with the Town to create the new access road. L. P. Murray and Sons created the parking area. Our then-Stewardship Director Hannah Chamberlain directed these activities, and with our amazing stewardship volunteers, cleared and built the trails. Our faithful friends at the Piper Shores Woodshop made the handsome bench and trail signage, and the new preserve was officially opened in June 2020.

Blue Point Preserve is loaded with large, mature trees, and birds are abundant. A kiosk clearly marks the trailhead that is surrounded by a canopy of maples. The trail soon



opens out into an old roadbed lined with towering birch and poplar trees. As you near the Marsh, the visual heights lower and you round a curve of bushes just before you come to a grassy clearing with a bench. Marsh grass, bushes and wildflowers provide a perfect frame to an expansive view of the Marsh and its wildlife.

Clear simple signage identifies the South Leg and the North Leg of the trail, and the way to the Marsh View. For those who want a short, flat walk out to the Marsh and back, the South Leg is perfect. The North Leg takes visitors into the woods on the full trail loop, and starts with a magnificent Wolf Pine that has multiple, massive trunks emanating from its huge base. The trail runs along a wide earth ridge between gullies, and takes you back up to the grassy area with a sturdy new set of wooden stairs with railing, built by Tom Nolan, BPP Lead Steward, stewardship volunteer and member of the Church.

Our thanks to all of our partners, supporters and volunteers who made this conservation success possible. We hope you will visit this new gem of a property soon, and celebrate SLT's debut at the Marsh!

Stew-Com Still at Work - with Masks!

By Sami Wolf, Stewardship Director

Native Landscaping at Blue Point Preserve

If it's been a while since you visited our newest preserve off of Seavey Landing Rd, come admire the native Nannyberry bushes planted last month! Garden-savvy volunteers advised on the species and transplanting of the new additions, and a mask-wearing volunteer crew plus staff successfully planted 11 bushes during one of Maine's driest summers. The new additions demark the property boundary, and will provide privacy for our neighbor in the years to come. Nannyberry bushes can grow up to 10 feet tall and wide, and produce discs of fragrant white flowers.

Knotweed Control at Pleasant Hill

You may notice some change in scenery along Eleanor's trail recently. A hardy crew of community volunteers showed up to help us tackle some imposing stands of knotweed. Volunteers were divided between two heavily infested sites. Knotweed is an opportunistic plant that outcompetes our native species very successfully, and takes a lot of effort to control, even with the use of herbicides (which we do not use). It is rhizomatic, meaning that any scraps of plants can successfully take root, therefore cutting by hand is preferred to mowing to minimize shredding and accidental dispersal. The knotweed was cut by hand, salted, and smothered with weed-suppressant fabric and woodchips. This suppression work is phase one of treatment. It will need to be revisited in the spring to cut back any new growth that punctures the treatment area or grows up along the perimeter. By cutting and suppressing the large stands, we are minimizing the amount of cutting needed during growth periods later on.

Trail Planning at Broadturn Farm

Board member and Stewardship Committee Chair Seth Hanson and I recently took a walk around some proposed trail expansions at Broadturn Farm. John Bliss of Broadturn Farm gave us a great tour along some old woods roads, where we checked out a pine grove bisected by a stream and dotted with old apple trees, a small family cemetery, and some foundations and findings from farmsteads past. We're excited to formalize this trail system soon, and feel that it has great potential for winter fun!

Bog Bridge Upgrade at Libby River Farm

We are over the moon with the bog bridge upgrade on the Lucy Sprague trail at Libby River Farm! A delivery of wood for this trail project ended up being way too heavy for even

our mighty volunteer crew, so Hillside Lumber offered to use their machinery to offload the delivery truck at their yard and then bring it to our work site in a more manageable way. We can't thank them enough! Also, special thanks to Madeleine Weatherhead of Camp Ketcha for helping us stage lumber in places that bigger machines couldn't reach. With help from the Recreational Trails Program grant, we are working with the Maine Conservation Corps to replace the bog bridges along this trail. The old bridges have reached their expected lifespan, and MCC is currently working hard to remove the old materials, repurpose any that are still viable, and build new bog bridges through October. If you see the crew out there, say a socially distanced "thank you" to them!

Swallows Field Boardwalk Build at Pleasant Hill

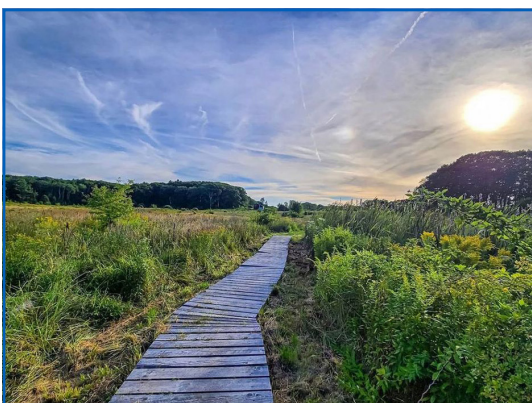
In May, planning began for a 140-foot long boardwalk to help solve the wetness issue on our new short-cut trail through Swallows Field. Work got underway in earnest the first weekend in June. Organized and lead by our then-Stewardship Director Hannah Chamberlain, the 14 sections of this boardwalk were completed on Saturday, June 13th. A remarkably short time to build an incredibly long boardwalk! The hardworking and masked volunteers for this ambitious project were Seth Hanson, Jim Hancock, Diane Neal, Rick Shinay, Paul Wagner, Tom Nolan, Sam Jacobs, and Alex Hennings. A big THANK YOU to all!



Planting Nannyberry Bushes at BPP.



Replacing Bog Bridges at LRF.



*Sun Waning over PHP Boardwalk,
Photo by Karissa Foley.*



*Swallows Field Boardwalk
Build at PHP.*



Knotweed Removal at PHP.

Long-term Lease Allows Investment in Long-term Goals

by Stacy Brenner and John Bliss - Owners of Broadturn Farm, Inc.

Initially, back in 2006 when we first connected with Scarborough Land Trust through Maine Farmland Trust's Maine Farmlink program, we started out with a short-term 5-year lease, which was the most comfortable for both parties. When it was time to renew, we negotiated and signed a 30-year lease. However, over time, as we started to evaluate how to continue to grow the business, it became clear that **we needed to develop a model that allowed the farm business and the farm land to stay linked together.** The value of *Broadturn Farm, Inc.*, which is set up as an S-Corp, is partially based on its continued access to this land and any current and future infrastructure improvements.

Developing a long-term lease arrangement with anyone, but most especially between a community non-profit and a set of farmers moves "at the speed of trust." After 4 years of discussions and presentations and draft leases, **we found our answer in a well drafted 99-year lease that is held by our business entity, *Broadturn Farm, Inc.***, rather than by us as individual farmers. **This arrangement ties the land and the business together and allows the business to grow and make investments in infrastructure**, and also change hands while not jeopardizing its connection to the physical property. There are stop-gap measures in the lease to ensure agriculture is the primary activity on the property and that the board of SLT can be involved in the selection of new business entity owners.



We are now secure enough in our tenancy to invest in infrastructure. Before the 99-year lease, our investments were tentative and only made out of short-range goals. Now, we can afford to make more ambitious investments. One project we are already starting on is a replacement to one of the barns in the dooryard. **The old poultry barn with its low roof and dirt floor will be replaced with an all-purpose barn which will be winterized and suitable to house a commercial kitchen, bathrooms and an office.**

As we settle into our new security as long-term leaseholders, we are excited to share our experience and our model with other land trusts, landowners interested in the long-term agricultural operation on their land, and young farmers looking to start farm businesses who don't have secure access to land. There isn't one right model for land access for farmers, but we do feel strongly that after many years of thinking about how to make this work, we have found a pathway that feels beneficial to all parties involved.

When you are faced with the passion to have an agricultural business and have no family land to inherit, the barrier of land access is the first and largest hurdle you face. A community that has affordable and supportive models for land access communicates to young farmers: we want you in our community, we value your choice of work, and you bring an inherent value to our landscape with the work of agriculture.



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**Watch for our
Fall Appeal**

Watch for our Fall Appeal in your mailbox in November. SLT is growing and your generous gift will help us continue our work to conserve Scarborough's special places and care for them – forever.

Thank you!

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